



# Fact Sheet

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## LEVEL OF HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (HEAP)

Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP) is a new variable for the 2006 Census. It records the highest educational achievement a person has attained, encompassing both school and non-school education. It lists qualifications and other educational attainments regardless of the particular field of study or the type of institution in which the study was undertaken.

Prior to the introduction of the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), it was not possible to produce a single measure because the classification in use was restricted in scope to post-school qualifications. The ASCED is broader in scope and includes both school and non-school education. It has been in use since 2001. For further information please see the **2001 Census of Population and Housing Factsheet: Education - Changes for 2001 Census, 2001** (ABS Cat. No. 2970.0.55.025) released on 3 June 2002 on the ABS website.

Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP) may be used to determine the general level of educational achievement of the Australian population and of specific groups in Australian society; to investigate the relationship between levels of education and employment outcomes, income and other socioeconomic variables; and as a proxy measure of socioeconomic status.

### DERIVING LEVEL OF HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (HEAP)

Two variables, Highest Year of School Completed (HSCP) and Non-school Qualification: Level of Education (QALLP) are used to derive Level of Highest Educational Attainment. The highest year of school completed is compared with the level of the highest non-school qualification to determine which is the highest. The order of the ASCED Classification generally determines which attainment will be considered higher, but in some cases it is not clear and decision rules are applied.

In particular, there is significant overlap in level of education between ASCED Broad Levels 5 Certificate Level and 6 Secondary Education. Some Secondary Education is regarded as higher than some Certificate level attainments.

The following decision table is used to prioritise responses to questions on Level of Highest Non-School Qualification and Highest Year of School Completed which have been coded to ASCED Broad Levels 5 and 6 respectively.

The purpose of the decision table is to provide a means of consistently selecting a single level of attainment whenever a single level only is required for statistical purposes.

Table 1: Derivation of HEAP - Decision Table

Highest Year of School Completed (HSCP)	Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (QALLP)						
	Certificate nfd (500)	Certificate III & IV (510)	Certificate IV (511)	Certificate III (514)	Certificate I & II nfd (520)	Certificate II (521)	Certificate 1 (524)
Year 12 (611)	Year 12	Cert. III & IV nfd	Cert. IV	Cert. III	Year 12	Year 12	Year 12
Year 11 (613)	Year 11	Cert. III & IV nfd	Cert. IV	Cert. III	Year 11	Year 11	Year 11
Year 10 (621)	Year 10	Cert. III & IV nfd	Cert. IV	Cert. III	Year 10	Cert. II	Year 10
Year 9 (622)	Cert.nfd	Cert. III & IV nfd	Cert. IV	Cert. III	Cert. I & II nfd	Cert. II	Cert. I
Year 8 or below (623)	Cert.nfd	Cert. III & IV nfd	Cert. IV	Cert. III	Cert. I & II nfd	Cert. II	Cert. I

nfd = not further defined

note: numbers in brackets are the ASCED classification code also used for HEAP.

Figure 1: Highest Year of School Completed (HSCP)

**27 What is the highest year of primary or secondary school the person has completed?**

- Mark one box only.
- For persons who returned after a break to complete their schooling, mark the highest year completed when they last left.
- See page 10 of the Census Guide for more information about year equivalents.

☐ Year 12 or equivalent  
☐ Year 11 or equivalent  
☐ Year 10 or equivalent  
☐ Year 9 or equivalent  
☐ Year 8 or below  
☐ Did not go to school

**Examples of using the Decision Table:**

1. A person who responded to the standard question for Highest Year of School Completed with Year 12, and who also indicated that their Level of Highest Non-School Qualification was Certificate III would have those responses cross-checked on the Decision Table (Table 1 above) and would as a result have their Level of Highest Educational Attainment output as Certificate III.

2. If their response to Level of Highest Non-School Qualification had been Certificate, it would be cross checked against Year 12 on the Decision Table as Certificate nfd and the output would be Year 12.

**Incomplete Information**

In cases where there is incomplete information available regarding the Highest Year of School Completed, whether the person has completed any non-school qualification or the level of non-school education, the following table is used to determine the Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP).

Table 2: Derivation of HEAP - Incomplete Information

Highest Year of School completed (HSCP)	Qualification Indicator Question <sup>a</sup>	Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (QALLP)	Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP)
Not Stated	Stated ('Yes' response) <sup>b</sup>	Not Stated	Not Stated
Stated	Stated ('Yes' response) <sup>b</sup>	Not Stated	Not Stated
Not Stated	Stated ('Yes' response) <sup>b</sup>	Stated (Cert. nfd or Cert. I or Cert. II)	Not Stated
Not Stated	Stated ('Yes' response) <sup>b</sup>	Stated (Cert. III or above)	Value of Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (QALLP)
Not Stated	Stated ('No' response) <sup>c</sup>	Not applicable	Not Stated
Stated	Not Stated	Stated	Value of whichever is higher in derivation table
Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated
Not Stated	Not Stated	Stated (Cert. nfd or Cert. I or Cert. II)	Not Stated
Not Stated	Not Stated	Stated (Cert. III or above)	Value of Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (QALLP)

<sup>a</sup> Question 28 on the household form, see Figure 2.<sup>b</sup> 'Yes' response, indicating that the person had completed an educational qualification.<sup>c</sup> 'No' response, indicating that the person had not completed an educational qualification.

Figure 2: Qualification Indicator Question

**28** Has the person *completed* any educational qualification (including a trade certificate)?

- Mark one box only.
- See page 10 of the Census Guide for more information on the treatment of AQF or vocational certificates.

- ☐ No ► Go to 32
- ☐ No, still studying for first qualification ► Go to 32
- ☐ Yes, trade certificate/apprenticeship
- ☐ Yes, other qualification

### Examples of deriving HEAP with incomplete information

1. If the person is aged 15 years or more and does not answer the Highest Year of School Completed and Level of Highest Qualification questions on the Census form, but completes the Qualification Indicator question (QALIP) then the response is coded to Not stated for Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP).
2. If the person does not answer the Highest Year of School Completed (HSCP) and Qualification Indicator (QALIP) questions on the Census form, but completes the Level of Highest Qualification question then the response is coded to Not stated for Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP).
3. If the person answers the Highest Year of School Completed (HSCP) and the Qualification Indicator (QALIP) questions on the Census form but does not complete the Level of Highest Qualification question (QALLP), their response is coded to Not stated for Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP).
4. If the person does not answer the Highest Year of School Completed question (HSCP) but does answer the Qualification Indicator question (QALIP) by marking either 'Yes' response ('Yes, trade certificate/apprenticeship' or 'Yes, other qualification') and the response to the Level of Highest Qualification question (QALLP) is a Certificate not further defined or a Certificate I or II, the response is coded to Not stated for Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP). If the response to the Level of Highest Qualification (QALLP) is a Certificate III or above, then the response is coded to the relevant level for Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP).

### Level Inadequately Described

Where a response contains insufficient information to be coded to any level of the classification for the Level of Highest Qualification question, it is coded to Inadequately described.

### Not Applicable

The category Not Applicable is used to code all persons under 15 years of age

### No Educational Attainment

The category No Educational Attainment is used to code all persons who did not go to school and have no non-school qualifications.

### FIELD OF STUDY FOR LEVEL OF HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (HEAP)

Field of Study for Level of Highest Educational Attainment (HEAP) can be obtained, for those people who have indicated that they have completed a non-school qualification, through cross-classification with Non-School Qualification: Field of Study (QALFP).